

SHOP TALK—BY AMY ARMSTRONG

IN the words of the war correspondent it is "Just Before the Battle, Mother," for most of the shops these days. Winter still lingers and the chill in the air makes it plausible for the lord of the house to say to his wife and daughters, "O, you don't need anything yet. It is too cold for you to leave off your winter things." The new goods purchased by most of the buyers are only just arriving from the East and are scarcely unpacked, so things are rather at a standstill. Yet this does not prevent the "firstnighters" from being on hand for the initial showings of the new spring goods.

It is only a seeming calm before the storm, to mix the metaphor, for all of the stores are beginning to think about spring openings and they are only just keeping most of their good things for a surprise.

There are always those who do not believe in the old saying "Be not the first by whom the new is tried," and father's philosophical remarks and warnings about colds do not weigh any appreciable amount in the balance when in the other pan of the scale is the keen delight of being the first, or one of the very first, to wear a beautiful, fresh, spick and span new suit, a jaunty sport hat or a stunning top coat.

So for those who are holding the front ranks, the dogs of war have already been let loose and, just for a teaser, there are some wonderful things in the shops as hints and predictions of what is to come. Hats, suits and top coats with separate skirts are the first choice and have already begun to appear on the streets.

Women who are contemplating spring hats will be interested in the announcement made by the management of the millinery department of Auerbach's of the enlargement of the department. Twice the floor space formerly used is being utilized, the entire section which was previously devoted to waist showings, and the capacity increased to three or four times what it has been up to the present. The manager tells us that while he intends to keep constantly in the fore with the newest models and ideals, there will be the same reasonable prices as in the past. In addition to the higher priced models which have always been carried; for this season this shop will have the exclusive agency for Consello and Andria hats. There is also a representative showing from Moorehead, Jardine, Burgess and many others.

The department is divided into a number of distinct sections so that it is easy for a woman who has made up her mind before starting out what she wants, to find very readily what she desires. In one place are the high-priced hats, in another the popular priced ones, ranging all the way from \$3.95 to \$7.50. There is a sport hat section in which is a great variety of smart and nifty styles, with many color combinations. These sport hats are among the favorites of the season and the makers of the fashions tell us that they will be worn for many occasions where in times past a sport hat would have been considered decidedly persona non grata (for of course a hat has personality). They range in price from \$1 to \$10, so you see it is not a question of getting off particularly cheap by wearing said sport hat. A new section which is likely to prove popular with the economical woman who is deft with her fingers, is one of millinery supplies where frames, braids, wire, linings and all the other things will be offered for those who have the temerity to try making their own hats. The enthusiastic manager will tell you that he has the largest untrimmed hat sec-

tion in the west, that his tremendous buying power enables him to set his low prices and that it is his intention to please all comers.

The manager of the cloak and suit department of this store was telling me about a garment strike in New York. That is, the garments are not striking, but the persons who make them are, so that there is a decided shortage. While it may not be felt so much right now while stocks are more or less complete, it may be later on. The price of crepe de chine, he says has gone up outrageously. What could formerly be purchased wholesale at 65 cents is now \$1.00 and \$1.50. Better buy crepe de chine waists while there is yet time. He is showing some serge and taffeta combinations which are attractive, one of black taffeta and blue serge, hand-embroidered trimming, sleeves belled at the bottom, with the materials combined in rather an odd fashion, priced at \$32.50.

One of his sport costumes makes you green with envy while you gaze at it, and it is not the reflection of colors, either. It is in striped green and natural color pongee, all buttoned up and down with oxidized buttons. It has an embroidered girdle which is the last touch in making it a ravishing whole, with the green and tan sport hat a-top of it. There are separate coats of silk jersey cloth, of kittenear, and and countless others, several in bisque which used to be sand last year.

The whole school of rose shades, that is everything from the faintest pink to the ever so much deeper shades are exceedingly popular. It is the fad color. Top coats come in these bright shades, in white which still promises to be the color of the season later on, and darker blues. Many are designed after the French military coats. These are all of such material that they can be put on and worn now. They do not have to be kept until the sun gets warmer and the last traces of snow have entirely disappeared.

Some gowns, evening and after-

noon, with all the style in the world are being shown by Hamilton's. They have so much individuality and are withal so complicated while looking like simplicity itself, that it is hopeless to attempt to describe them. Several are of the Georgette and taffeta combination and introduce the row upon row of taffeta ribbon on the net or Georgette foundation, each band of ribbon flared by a cord run through the bottom. The skirts are neither these horribly stiff circular things nor the intensely full ones, but fall in graceful ripples. This shop is also displaying some of the smart silk jersey sport hats with nobby bands or scarfs of the same material.

Speaking of suits, Walker Brothers' store has some exceptionally good values at the ridiculously low price of \$19.75. They come in black and white checks, navy and black and the materials are gaberdines, poplins, serges and worsted, in sizes from 16 to 44. These include coats of every different length, full skirts, many trimmed with straps, patch pockets on both skirt and jacket and many having patent leather belts. And while on the subject it may be well to repeat that every correctly dressed woman will choose for herself this year a coat length which is becoming to her. There is no hard and fast rule as to what length shall be worn and what is passe. Every length is being shown and there are all style in the different lengths.

To go with these suits the same store has a showing of waists at \$4.95 in crepe de chine, laces, Georgette and satin combinations and lace and Georgette combinations of which one has a made desire to purchase about a dozen at a time. They come in flesh, black, white, navy, stripes and plaids. Some of them are tucked, some plain and among them are some especially effective shoulder trimmings of buttons or tucks, and the majority of them have the two-in-one collar which can be worn either high or low.

Keith-O'Brien's millinery department is featuring a new riding hat called the "Billie Burke." Oh, to be famous enough to have a hat named after one. It is a particularly "classy" looking hat in the mushroom shape of black lisere straw with just a band. It is short in the back and front and wide on the sides. This same department has a plain sailor which comes in all the shades mostly for use as a sport hat. It is a copy of a Knox. The colors of the hour in New York are rose, light grey and white. Wear any of these and you may be sure many a New York sister is doing the same.

An evening dress in this shop caught my eye in passing because it had a sort of erie attractiveness. It was entirely of brown, a rather dark brown, all but a touch of black in the trimming and one bright, tiny flower on the right shoulder. It was constructed of silk net throughout with many layers of full skirt and a girdle bodice with only straps for the shoul-

ders. The trimming was butterflies of black yet enmeshed in the folds and most of them half hidden. The dress even on display looked exactly like a dainty butterfly poised for flight and the spot of color on the right shoulder was the only thing for contrast. It sounds rather somber in description but the material was so light and fluffy that for a person who can wear brown I can imagine nothing more attractive.

But speaking of such a dress makes one think of the story told by a local man who sells dresses. A young woman purchased a dress of Georgette the day before New Year's to wear to a dancing party on the eve of the new year. She was in such a hurry that it was possible only to catch up the hem in the shortening and she was told that if she would bring the dress back the next day the stitching would be done so that it would be more permanent. "I expect it will be hardly necessary," she laughed. "I don't suppose there will be anything left of it tomorrow." And sure enough when she did bring it back the next day to have the hem stitched it looked "like it had been through the war" if what was recounted to me was literally true. But of course that does not bother the merchants any for it means just so many more sales. Nor does it in any way concern the young women for they will wear what they will wear and that is all there is about it.

Quantities of dainty neckwear are being shown now in the shops, vests and small collars. These are exceptionally pretty worn with the darker waists or silk dresses. The Woman's Shop is offering some wonderfully attractive blouses of the more dressy styles, among the prettiest seen anywhere. Many of them come in the pastel shades and are bright and festive harbingers of spring. Lots of them, too, have the rippling collars and pleatings or ruffings at the front which take away the plainness and give the waists an air of their own which only the touch of the artist maker can give. In a week or two at the most now spring will have arrived with all her robes and the stores will be resplendent in their offerings.

SPICE

Since he learned that the billion-dollar loan is to remain in this country, Mr. Bryan somehow has seemed less eager about his European trip.—Boston Transcript.

The Czar is still monarch of all he surveys—but his survey doesn't extend as far as it used to.—Wichita Beacon.

Fond Mother—Aye, dear lad, there's not a day passes but what I think of you in that awful submarine, with only the periscop to breathe through.—Punch.